



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY Health Department

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**By Melanie Reynolds
County Health Officer**

Residents of Lewis and Clark County have reason to be proud of the judicial outcome of a recent case involving the Montana Clean Indoor Air Act (CIAA). This law bans smoking in enclosed public places.

After a day-long trial on March 5, a six-person jury in Justice Court found a local casino manager guilty of three misdemeanor counts of violating the law. Although other communities have successfully enforced the CIAA since its passage in 2005, this was the first time a case has gone to trial.

This verdict is worth celebrating. The jury affirmed the importance of being able to enjoy our public spaces free from exposure to the serious health impacts of secondhand smoke. They said loud and clear that ours is a community that values public health.

The Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department is pleased with the verdict and the message it sends to families and businesses. The CIAA protects the health of workers and the public and ensures a fair and level playing field for all businesses in Montana. Compliance is not a matter of personal preference. It's not optional.

This case also conveys an important message to our youth: Don't start using tobacco; it's not safe, and it's not acceptable in public places.

The mission of the health department is to protect and improve the health of residents of Lewis and Clark County. Our goal with regard to the CIAA is to support, encourage, educate, and enforce this law. Education is our primary tool. We want to help businesses understand the law, and we work with them to come into compliance and avoid complaints, violations, and prosecution.

We all know about the serious health consequences of tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke. Tobacco is implicated in the deaths of about 1,400 Montanans a year, mostly as a result of cancer and heart disease. Quitting – or never taking up the highly addictive habit in the first place – is the single best thing people can do for their health.

Studies have shown that laws like the CIAA reduce tobacco use, as well as rates of cancer and heart disease.

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improve and protect the health of all county residents.*

The health department enforces the CIAA by responding to complaints from citizens who believe they spot a violation. If you have questions or concerns about smoking in public places or would like to report a potential violation, please contact us at healthinfo@co.lewis-clark.mt.us or 443-2584.

Melanie Reynolds is the Lewis and Clark County health officer and director of the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department.

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